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ADDRESS

FROM THE

LONDON CORRESPONDING SOCIETY

TO THE

INHABITANTS OF GREAT BRITAIN,

on the Subject of a

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

Unbleſt by Virtue, Government a League
Becomes, a circling Junto of the Great,
To rob by Law; Religion mild, a Yoke
To tame the ſtooping Soul, a trick of State
To maſk their Rapine, and to ſhare the Prey.
What are without it Senates, but a Face
Of Conſultation deep and Reaſon free,
While the determin'd Voice and Heart are ſold?
What boaſted Freedom but a ſounding Name?
And what Election but a Market vile,
Of Slaves ſelf-bartered?——THOMSON'S LIBERTY.

FELLOW CITIZENS,

OF every rank and of every ſituation in life, Rich, Poor, High or Low, we addreſs you all as our Brethren, on a ſubject of the higheſt importance and moſt intimately connected with the welfare of every Individual who deems Liberty a Bleſſing, who partakes in the proſperity of his country, and who wiſhes to tranſmit as much of either as he poſſibly can, to poſterity.

Uninfluenced by party pique or ſelfiſh motives --no ways affrighted at the frowns of power--not in the leaſt awed by the evidently hoſtile preparations of a much alarmed Ariſtocracy, We, the London Correſponding Society, united with a view of obtaining a THOROUGH PARLIAMENTARY REFORM, anxiouſly demand your ſerious and moſt collected attention to the preſent VITIATED State of the Britiſh Government; we entreat you to examine coolly aud impartially the numerous abuſes that prevail therein, their deſtructive conſequences on the poor, and their evil tendency on all, as alſo the rapidity with which theſe abuſes encreaſe both in number and magnitude.

We next ſubmit to your examination an effectual mode of putting a ſtop to them and of thereby reſtoring to our no leſs boaſted than impaired Conſtitution its priſtine vigour and purity; and we thereunto warmly ſolicit the junction of your efforts with ours.

This great end however we believe attainable, ſolely, by the whole nation deeply impreſſed with a ſenſe of its wrongs uniting, and as it were with one voice demanding of thoſe to whom for a while it has entruſted its Sovereignty, a Reſtoration of, ANNUALLY ELECTED PARLIAMENTS, UNBIASSED AND UNBOUGHT ELECTIONS, AND AN EQUAL REPRESENTATION OF THE WHOLE BODY OF THE PEOPLE.

Leaving to the Enemies of Freedom, all violent tumultuous and unconſtitutional proceedings, We invite you to peaceful, well regulated, and neighbourly meetings, wherein induſtrious worthy Citizens may as Honeſt Men, as good Patriots in a reaſonable and ſenſible manner, laying aſide prejudice, ſeriouſly and earneſtly take into conſideration their rights and the welfare of the preſent and ſucceeding Generation.

As Men can never barter away the rights of their Poſterity---as encroachments on Liberty or Property ceaſe not to be Grievances from their being cuſtomary and of long ſtanding---and as a Grievance is not the leſs felt for being denied by thoſe who cauſe it---feeling Grievances enormous, ---ſeeing our Liberties encroached upon and endeavoured to be entirely purloined from us---as alſo that our plaints are derided by Government and ourſelves unlawfully menaced by thoſe in Power, We, call upon you all Britons to remember your privileges as ſuch, and to aſſert your Rights as Men---to pay all proper regard to your native freedom, and to conſider that, being the property of no one man nor of any ſet of men, it

is highly diſgraceful for you to ſuffer yourſelves any longer to be thus enſlaved and diſpoſed of as Cattle in a fair, as irrational Beaſts in a market, to the higheſt Bidder.

Laying aſide all pretenſions to Originality we claim no other merit, than that, of reconſidering and verifying what has already been urged in our common cauſe by the Duke of Richmond, Mr. Pitt, and their then Honeſt Party years back, now differing from them we ſupport with candour and Zeal (thereby proving ourſelves no Courtiers) the Banner of Truth already diſplayed againſt the Oppreſſors of mankind, and we take a Pride in acknowledging ourſelves a part of that uſeful claſs of citizens which placemen (penſioned with the extorted produce of our daily labour) and proud Nobility wallowing in riches, (acquired ſomehow) affect to treat with a contempt too degrading for human nature to bear, unleſs roconciled to it by the reflection that though their inferiors in rank and fortune, we equal them in Talents and excel them in Honeſty.

Still Friends and Fellow Citizens, poſſeſſed of Souls far ſuperior to the evil Spirit influencing theſe Oppreſſors, theſe Debaſers of mankind, inſtead of hating we contemn them, and our motive is not vengeance but redreſs.

A Conſtitution we are ſaid to poſſeſs, we are willing to believe it---if good, it allows redreſs to a complaining people---if excellent, as many aſſert, it muſt naturally point out the means thereof ---Let it therefore be publickly and carefully examined---if it is really what it ought to be---it cannot be too well known---if faulty---it cannot be too ſoon amended---nor can that be done by a more competent Judge than the thus collected ſenſe of the whole nation.

It is the right of every Individual to be well

acquainted with the Laws that bind him--but how is the Peaſant, the Mechanic, the Manufacturer, to obtain that neceſſary Knowledge-----his time fully employed in labouring hard to provide a ſcanty meal for his family, and in earning wherewith to ſatisfy the frequent and peremptory demands of ſurly Tax-gatherers---he has no leiſure for ſuch intricate political reſearches; and even was he, by ſtealing that leiſure from his labour or his ſleep, to acquire the deſired inſight---ſtill with ſpirits depreſſed by his ſufferings, with fears encreaſed by the clamorous threats of the penſioned all devouring Locuſts in Office, the ſore oppreſſed ſubject feels the Remedy to be far out of his reach and dread the conſequence of being even ſuppoſed to know how greatly he is wronged---Such being the forlorn ſituation of three fourths of the Nation, how are Britons to obtain information and redreſs? Will the Court, will Miniſtry afford either? Will Parliament grant them? Will the Nobles or the Clergy eaſe the people's Sufferings? No. Experience tells us, and Proclamations confirm it, that the Intereſt and the Intention of Power are combined to keep the nation in torpid ignorance!

The only reſource then, Friends and fellow Citizens, will be found in thoſe Societies which, inſtituted with a view to the public Good, promote a general inſtruction of our rights as men, expoſe the abuſes of thoſe in power, and point out the only conſtitutional, the only effectual means of forwarding a public inveſtigation and obtaining a complete redreſs for a people in whoſe credulous good nature originated their preſent difficulties.

We will not hurt your feelings by a minute detail of our common grievances, you cannot be ignorant, Friends and fellow Sufferers, how generally Power, Place, Penſion and Title, are the rewards of men whoſe ſervices to the Court have

been of the greateſt prejudice to the Country---- you painfully feel the Conſequences, encreaſed Taxes, a great part of which are moſt vilely ſquandered---a heavy National Debt, begun with a deſign of forming a powerful and monied court party, continued with nearly the ſame view, unto its preſent enormous bulk, and from its commencement militating againſt our Liberties---too viſible are the numerous encroachments on our Rights, too common the Inſolence of Office, the venality of Magiſtracy, the perverſion of the Laws, the letting looſe the Military on every occaſion, and thoſe occaſions eagerly ſought. The ſubject's complaints derided---the one part of the Nation turned into Spies and Informers againſt the other---the ---but wherefore more? Is here not enough to prove, beyond a doubt, that while we boaſt the beſt Conſtitution, the mildeſt Laws, the freeſt Government, we are in fact Slaves!

Yet, Fellow Citizens! numerous as are our grievances, and cloſe rivetted as weighty the ſhackles on our freedom, reform one abuſe, and the others will all diſappear---if we once regain an Annually elected Parliament, and that Parliament to be fairly choſen by all, the people will again ſhare in the Government of their Country and their then unbought unbiaſſed ſuffrages muſt undoubtedly ſelect a majority of Honeſt Members, while the very few unſound ones that may accidentally obtain ſeats, will from the conſideration of their Annual Dependance on the people, think it highly adviſable to continue the diſguiſe that procured them their Election and at leaſt wear the maſk of Honeſty---a Maſk neither at all times neceſſary, nor at all times worn in a Septenial Parliament.

Let no man imagine himſelf unconcerned in the propoſed reform---let no one think ſo meanly of

his ſituation or abilities, as to ſuppoſe his coming forward will be of no ſervice to the Cauſe of Liberty! Numbers, Union and Perſeverance muſt in the end be crowned with ſucceſs, while compared with the ſmall efforts of each Individual, aſſociating and thereby countenancing the demand of the nation to be reſtored to its Conſtitutional rights, how great will appear the advantages reſulting therefrom!

An Honeſt Parliament!
An Annual Parliament!
A Parliament wherein each Individual will have his Repreſentative!

Soon then ſhould we ſee our Liberties reſtored, the Preſs free, the Laws ſimplified, Judges unbiaſſed, Juries independant, Needleſs Places and Penſions retrenched, Immoderate Salaries reduced, the Public better ſerved, Taxes diminiſhed and the Neceſſaries of life more within the reach of the poor, Youth better educated, Priſons leſs crowded, old Age better provided for, and ſumptuous Feaſts, at the expence of the ſtarving poor, leſs frequent.

Look not upon this, Dear Countrymen, as an enthuſiaſtic viſion, but rather let us together take a calm and reaſonable review of ſuch an Honeſt Parliament aſſembled---let us in idea curtail their Seſſion unto even the ſhort duration of three months in one year, or ſixty-four meetings for doing the annual buſineſs of the nation---ſtill five hundred Honeſt Men meeting ſixty-four times with both Intention and Capacity to ſerve their Country, muſt do ſomething, muſt employ their time ſomehow. Conteſted Elections none, or very few, and ſoon determined; Party Debates, none, the Intereſt of the People being one; Long Speeches much diminiſhed, Honeſt Men ſeeking reaſon, not oratory; No placemen in the Senate, Corrupt Influence dies away, and with it all tedi-

ous, obſtinate, Miniſterial oppoſition to meaſures calculated for the public good: Deteſting Chicanery, Oppreſſion and Injuſtice of every kind, this Honeſt Parliament, finding that the Laws wanted ſimplification and arrangement, would ſet about it, however deſtructive their labours might prove to the ſordid Intereſt of an ambitious Judge, a proſtituted Council, a packed Jury, or a vile herd of Pettifoggers, Trading Juſtices, Bailiffs or Runners.

Finding that a moſt extraordinary waſte of public money had taken place under the different pretences of Places, Penſions, Contracts, Armaments, Subſidies, Secret Service Money, &c. our Honeſt and Annual Parliament would, after narrowly ſcrutinizing the ſame, retrench every ſum needleſſly or wickedly laid out.

Recalling to their mind that wiſe and wholeſome proviſion of the 12th of William III. Chap. 2. enacting that *All reſolutions taken in the Privy Council ſhall be ſigned by ſuch of the Privy Council as ſhall adviſe and conſent to the ſame.* They would call for an immediate renewal of that long ſuſpended Law, and by ſo doing all deſtructive ſecret Influence would be rooted up, and the people could then, at all times, diſcover who were their friends, and who their foes.

The People's parliament, finding that under various pretences Grants of Common Land had been obtained by ſundry perſons no ways to the benefit of the Community, but very much to the diſtreſs of the poor, the ſame would be ſoon reſtored to the public, and the robbed peaſant again enabled Annually to ſuppy his diſtreſſed family with an encreaſed quantity of bread out of the profit ariſing from the liberty regained of grazing a Cow, two or three Sheep, or a brood of Geeſe thereon.

With deteſtation would that Parliament view any man enjoying the emoluments of ſix or ſeven places either needleſs and overpaid as requiring altogether but one Officer, or elſe their ſeveral duties neglected and the public thereby deprived of that ſervice for which they pay their money.

Numerous other Reforms would undoubtedly take place, even in the firſt Seſſion of Parliament ſo elected, dependent only on their Electors the people; unſworn therefore by Faction, undivided by Party, uncorrupted by Miniſtry, and uninfluenced but by the public Good. Every tranſaction would tend to reform, and a ſtrict Œconomy its natural conſequence, might ſoon enable us to reduce our Taxes, and by the Integrity of Parliament, that reduction would light upon ſuch objects as beſt might relieve the Poor, this to the people would prove an advantageous and a novel Seſſion, and to an honeſt parliament not a tireſome one.

Therefore Britons, Friends and fellow Citizens, with hand and heart unite, claim what is your Right, perſevere and be Free, for who ſhall dare withſtand our Juſt demands!---Oppreſſion already trembling at the voice of Individuals, will ſhrink away and diſappear for ever, when the Nation United ſhall aſſert its privileges, and demand their Reſtoration.

Signed by Order,

M. MARGAROT, CHAIRMAN.
T HARDY, SECRETARY.

Ordered, that the Secretary of this Society, do tranſmit Copies of the above to all the Societies in the Nation, engaged in the ſame cauſe.

London, 6th Auguſt, 1792,